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ABSTRACT

Designed to provide specific, practical help for educators in starting or improving school public relations programs, this guide presents views from the superintendent of a small district who is his own public relations person; from a public relations director of a large suburban district; and from a public relations administrator of one of the nation's largest urban school districts. Small districts are claimed to enjoy two direct advantages when it comes to developing and implementing an effective communications program: the program can take on a very personal quality, and the media in small districts are usually "proschool." A public relations program for suburban districts must deal with unique concerns that include geographical area, population consideration, competition for attention, developing a sense of community, and planning the program to use all media channels. Finally, in large school districts the total city community must be invited to become intensively involved with the schools. The three types of districts are given advice on getting started, program ideas, and ways to obtain meaningful feedback on information efforts. The appendices contain sample forms to assist in setting up a school public relations program. (Author/MLF)

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BASIC SCHOOL PR KIT

BASIC SCHOOL PR GUIDE

PR Programs For Small, Suburban And Large Districts

One in a series of eight school public relations guides which contain concise, tested and practical ideas.

EA 015 218

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National School Public Relations Association

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Introduction

NSPRA's **Basic School PR Kit,** of which this guide is a part, is designed to provide specific, practical help for educators in starting or improving school PR programs. The Kit has been developed in response to the hundreds of requests for help NSPRA receives each year. Material on vital public relations topics is presented in the most concise, usable format possible.

The basic concept of public relations is explained on cassette tape by Edward L. Bernays, the man who pioneered the field of public relations in the 1920s. Important school PR topics are covered in detail in eight tightly-written guides. Additional materials are included in a resource packet containing public relations standards, proven ideas that work, and a PR planning guide and worksheet.

Altogether, the **Basic School PR Kit** is a short course in school PR fundamentals, a refresher for existing programs, a ready reference for dealing with problems that arise and a resource for anyone working to build public confidence in education.

This guide for *PR Programs For Small, Suburban and Large Districts,* points out that PR programs for schools — small and large — have many things in common, but each has special needs. This guide brings the reader three different views from those on the firing line: from the superintendent of a small district who is his own PR person; from a PR director of a large suburban district; and from a PR administrator of one of the nation's largest urban school districts.

Authors for this guide are: **Duane Bachman,** Ed.S., Superintendent of Schools, Piqua City School District, Piqua, Ohio; **George F. Hamel,** Director, School/Community Relations, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, Virginia; **Jerome G. Kovalcik,** Assistant Superintendent, Division of Public Affairs, Board of Education of the City of New York, N.Y.

This Kit was developed by John H. Wherry, executive director of the National School Public Relations Association, and Virginia M. Ross, director of school communication services, who edited the material. It was produced by Kim F. Hasten, manager of editorial and production services, with special technical and production assistance provided by Barbara Acosta, Jean Berger, Judi Cowan, Mary Ann Johnson and Norma Meyer. The graphics in the Kit were developed by Susan R. Eason of Eason and Associates and Kim F. Hasten.

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SECTION I
PR For Small Districts

Duane Bachman, Superintendent
Piqua City (Ohio) School District

Chapter 1
Philosophy

An effective communications program must:

- Begin with quality instruction. There is no substitute for excellent staff members;
- Be personal and continuous;
- Appeal to the "person on the street" without ignoring the many other publics of a school district;
- Promote a "we care" attitude;
- "Listen" to the people;
- Be examined regularly and expanded to meet the needs of the community.

Any public relations effort that completely ignores any of these points will eventually find its motives challenged by the citizens of the district.

The Board of Education

A comprehensive communications program for any district —large or small — must enjoy the complete support of the board of education, beginning with a policy statement as to its importance to the well-being of the district. This philosophy accepts the fact that the board of education will be completely informed of the activities, plans, progress and problems of the school district by the administrative team. In turn, the board of education must accept the fact that an effective communications program will take time and effort on the part of everyone involved with the educational process.

The Superintendent

The success or failure of the communications program will eventually be reflected in the attitude and enthusiasm of the superintendent. As chief school administrator he/she must be totally committed to the importance of communications in the school district. At the same time the superintendent must be able to transfer both the philosophy and the enthusiasm to the staff. When the "team" approach is firmly entrenched in the public relations effort, the school district and the community will enjoy an exciting future.

The Advantages Of Being Small

Those in the smaller school districts are oftentimes envious of the larger districts, but when it comes to developing and implementing an effective communications program, small districts enjoy at least two distinct advantages:

- The communications program can take on a very personal quality, and being able to know nearly everyone on the staff and in the community adds a great deal to its success.
- A special relationship is usually established with the news media. With rare exception, the media in the smaller districts can be labeled "pro-school." In many instances one reporter covers all of the news beats and in the essence of time must rely heavily on school officials for news stories. It is not uncommon for smaller newspapers to reprint school news releases verbatim.

Chapter 2
Getting Started

Often small district superintendents feel that their communications programs are not sufficient. They may not be giving themselves enough credit. They are probably doing more communicating than they think, but have never taken time to reduce the efforts to writing. That, in itself, is the starting point.

It is absolutely essential to begin by compiling a list of the existing communications activities in your district, starting with the more traditional avenues such as district newsletters, advisory committees, staff bulletins, annual reports and the like. A brainstorming session with a group of staff members would add to the list. The length of the list may be pleasantly surprising.

Once a written list of current public relations activities is available, the next step is to identify the people that are the recipients of those efforts. Identifying the "publics" is crucial to the program, if for no other reason than to guarantee that various groups (publics) in the community are aware of the activities and plans of the school district.

This process can be started by listing the **internal publics** that are involved on a regular basis. Obviously the most visible internal public is the teaching staff, but don't forget the students, support staff, the administrative team, the substitute teachers, retired employees, board of education members and student teachers. And, there are many others.

The next step is to list the "external" publics. The only danger to identifying **external publics** is that of establishing categories that are too broad to deal with in a logical manner. An external public labeled "parents" may look sufficient, but unless that term is divided further to include "parents of public school children," "parents of non-public students," "parents of preschool children," and "parents of students who have graduated," it may be nearly impossible to focus on the specific needs of each of the groups.

Under external publics, the importance of senior citizens, business and industry, service clubs and graduates cannot be overlooked. It might even be prudent to consider some special commu-

nications avenues for a group of people who are important and may not have a good feeling about the schools, namely the young men and women who dropped out of school and remain in the community.

With lists now available of current communications activities and the school district's internal and external publics it may be extremely beneficial to construct a **communications grid** to see how effectively the information needs of the community are being met. A communications grid (see Appendix A) can be completed by checking those activities that reach the various publics. From the grid it is easy to see which publics are getting the proper attention and which are in need of some special efforts.

As communications activities and publics are added to the grid it is not difficult to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program. A separate grid for the internal and external publics may be more manageable after a period of time.

Your communications targets for the year are set. They should be continually re-examined and changed when necessary. At the end of a school year, the entire program should be evaluated and then the process repeated for the next year.

Some Communications Ideas

Your existing program probably includes many of the traditional approaches to communications. Don't be alarmed or ashamed of them. If they are working for you, stay with them. They are usually the backbone of the entire communications program. Expanding on the current program should be your goal. The ideas to follow should provide you with suggestions and techniques that have worked in the Piqua City (Ohio) Schools.

Chapter 3
Program Ideas For External Publics

Open Office Hours

Even in the smallest school districts there is a feeling that the average citizen cannot communicate directly with the superintendent. Being accessible to the public is important, and the "open office hours" concept demonstrates it. Every two or three weeks the local newspaper reminds readers that "open office hours" will be held at a specific time on a particular school day, including the fact that anyone interested in speaking with the chief school administrator may do so without an appointment. When the general public knows that you are accessible and willing to dialogue with them, they feel comfortable in viewing the sincerity of the communications program.

What's For Breakfast?

We felt a strong need to communicate with specific occupational groups in the community and as a result the "What's For Breakfast?" program was started. We decided that the **realtors** should be chosen to inaugurate the program. We invited them to join us for breakfast as our guests and followed the meal with an informal agenda. We shared some of our printed materials, responded to questions and explained some of the plans and problems of the school district. The response from the realtors was overwhelming. We were so pleased that we invited the ministers to the next breakfast program and went on to expand the program by including insurance agents, doctors, lawyers and other publics interested in this type of dialogue to further their understanding of the schools.

Neighborhood Walk

For the most satisfying communication experience of your professional life, try a "neighborhood walk." As a chief school administrator I decided that the best way to get acquainted with the community was to go to the neighborhoods and meet the people on a personal basis.

I spent about 14 summer evenings visiting the neighborhoods of my district with the elementary principal of the attendance area, a staff member from that building and at least one representative from the PTA/PTO unit. We dressed informally and visited with everyone that was enjoying the summer evening, whether it be on the porch, mowing the lawn or just strolling down the sidewalk.

Hats Off

The **Hats Off** program was designed to express our appreciation to citizens, students and staff members who are always doing those little "extra" things to benefit the school district. It's a very simple procedure. We ask the certified and non-certified staff to nominate fellow workers, students and citizens for a "Hats Off" award for those little extra activities. The nomination forms take only a few seconds to complete. They are given to the building principal and forwarded to the central office. They are summarized and sent to the local newspaper, to print in their special "Hats Off" column. After they are published we send the nominees a certificate recognizing their selection. The response from the staff has been overwhelming and the recipients have been extremely pleased with the recognition given them.

Info-Phone

Communicating can be a 24-hours-a-day project if your are willing to invest in an **Info-Phone**. For as little as $200 you can purchase a message unit that can be connected to your telephone system. During non-business hours and on the week-ends persons can call the office number and listen to a one-minute tape that announces the menu for the following school day, meetings for the community, athletic events, school delays or closings and other items of interest to the citizens of the district.

SWAP Day

How about suggesting that the students at your secondary schools take a day off from school with your blessing? That's what **SWAP Day (Switch With A Parent)**, is all about. The students get excused from school in return for Mom, Dad, aunt, uncle or any citizen taking his or her place during that school day.

Following a student schedule for an entire day is an enjoyable, if not tiring, experience for the adults. At the end of the day the participants appreciate the job teachers do for the students, and know that the curriculum, even though changed over the years, is both pertinent and challenging.

Honorary Diploma

One of the publics that we can easily ignore is the young married couple starting a family. Many of them have been removed from the school environment for some time. The **Honorary Diploma** is intended to let those young persons know that the schools are interested in them and need their support. To do this, we have duplicated our high school diploma, added the word "honorary" and have mailed it to every newborn whose name is published in the local newspaper. The diploma includes the date of graduation and the signatures that appear on the diplomas offered to departing seniors.

Neighborhood Party Line

Communicating with a true cross section of the community is important to the communications process. To guarantee that the gamut of viewpoints is heard, each of our elementary principals nominates two parents to serve on our **Neighborhood Party Line.** This group meets quarterly with the superintendent to discuss items of concern. There is no formal agenda, only dialogue in response to the questions of the parents and other matters that need to be shared. Each parent is asked to share the results of the meeting with neighbors or friends. This is also an excellent feedback system to discover rumors and respond to them, if necessary.

Review Of Services

In every school district there are rare occasions when a citizen continually pursues a complaint against a school employee or a school program, and all attempts to resolve the matter on an informal basis fail.

When it is not possible to resolve the difference amicably, the **Review of Services** procedure calls for a formal process designed to finalize the problem area. The citizen is sent a form that requires an identification of the problem, a listing of school personnel that have been contacted about the situation, and a recommendation as to the solution of the matter.

The form is returned to the Superintendent and copies are made available to the persons involved in the allegation. A committee of school personnel is then convened and the citizen is asked to appear in the hope that face-to-face communication will bring about a better understanding of the problem and a solution that benefits everyone connected with the process.

The Business Page

Newspapers in most small communities regularly include a "business page," dominated by the notice of personnel promotions and sales achievements. Clipping those notices and sending them to school supporters is an effective way of recognizing the successes of others.

"McCalendar"

The owner of the local McDonalds restaurant was asked if he would provide a "blank" monthly calendar to the schools in return for appropriate promotional slogans associated with the most famous restaurants in the world. He agreed. Each month we now publish on our own printing press a listing of all school activities on the **"McCalendar"** and distribute it to the staff and elementary students. The response has been nothing less than fantastic.

Chapter 4
Program Ideas For Internal Publics

Welcome-Appreciation-Recognition Dinner

In mid-September we invite our entire staff (professional and support), board of education members (both current and past), and all retired employees to join us in sponsoring a "carry-in dinner." The spouses of all groups are also included.

Listening Cards

To improve our listening skills and to impress upon our citizens that we are interested in hearing from them, we have developed three cards. One card says, "I Heard A Rumor About the Piqua City Schools;" another says, "I Have An Idea To Improve the Piqua City Schools;" and the third says, "I Have A Question About the Piqua City Schools."

These cards are distributed to the chamber of commerce office, public library, banks, and other public offices in the community where the citizens can pick them up and return them for a response. The cards have the address of the board of education on them and a place for the citizen to include his or her name, if a personal answer from the superintendent is desired.

Holiday Open House

The winter holiday season offers an excellent opportunity to bolster staff morale. In mid-December, from early afternoon to an hour beyond the school day, the staff, retired employees and a group of school supporters in the community are invited to stop by the board of education office and share in the hospitality.

Students Speak

We felt a need to involve the very young students in our communications program and the **Students Speak** concept provided us with that opportunity. The school district has a five minute radio program on Saturday. Each week the radio reporter interviews students at a different elementary school.

Job Analysis Handbook

The **Job Analysis Handbook** includes a job description for each and every employee of the school district, an evaluation instrument and the procedure for everyone, a listing of the current salary schedules, and a summary of the fringe benefits available to the employees of the district. This lengthy document is especially helpful during the employment process and helps eliminate many of the misunderstandings that frequently arise in staff relationships.

What's Right With The Piqua City Schools?

Our **"What's Right With The Piqua City Schools?"** committee consists of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, the president and the vice-president of the teachers association. This committee has only one task — to write an article for each issue of the district newsletter that tells of something positive and specific about the local schools. We can tell our community that our standardized test scores are better than those at the state and national level, that there is discipline in the schools, that our staff is well-trained and dedicated, and that we are providing quality educational opportunities that make education the best buy in the community.

Tip Sheet

News reporters in the smaller communities are constantly searching for feature stories about the schools.

We developed a **"tip sheet"** which is sent to every school. All staff members are invited to submit story ideas — unique to the classroom or their job responsibilities, activities of their colleagues and/or students — that will promote the image of education and the district.

Impact Statement

In an effort to avoid possible problems and involve members of our administrative team in decision making we developed an "**impact statement**" procedure. On special "Impact Statement" masthead paper, a proposed change or policy question is outlined. Administrative team members respond citing the impact the proposed action(s) would have on those concerned — staff, students, parents, community, etc. If the response indicates obvious conflicts it alerts everyone to the fact that the proposal needs further study.

Proud Of Piqua's Youth

The "**Proud of Piqua's Youth**" campaign recognizes students who have helped others, participated in community projects or have shown outstanding ability or achievement. We seek those students whose activities have not been well promoted in the news media. Nominations are sought from staff and the list narrowed to 24 names. A picture is taken of each student and a brief description of the activity is written up and printed on a card. The 24 cards are printed and distributed to all buildings. We ask the staff to use them for notes, "happy grams," and to enclose in each piece of mail sent out. The library uses them for book marks and other public offices place them in their lobbies as "pick-up" items.

Chapter 5
Evaluating The Effectiveness Of Your Communication Program

Smaller school districts seldom have the resources of the larger districts when it comes time to evaluate the communications program. The evaluation process then is consistent with the development of the program, which is usually done without scientific base.

This limitation need not be fatal, however. It is possible to obtain meaningful feedback on your information efforts. Here are some informal hints that tell you if the communications in your district are effective.

- A person who received a get well card will stop you after church and thank you for remembering him/her.
- A tax levy is approved.
- A parent who received a "Hats Off" award tells you how much the certificate was appreciated.
- One of the cooks sees you in the grocery store and thanks you for the birthday card you sent.
- A mother calls you and thanks you for the "Honorary Diploma" for the newborn and asks if you would send her one for a youngster that was born several years ago.
- A father calls you and asks for a dozen "Proud of Piqua Youth" cards that included his daughter's picture.
- Parents visit you during "Open Office" hours and thank you for "listening" even if you could do little to help them.
- You see the smiles of the retired employees at the "Welcome-Appreciation-Recognition" dinner, especially grateful that you remembered to invite them.

(Not very scientific, but perhaps indicative of the feelings of the community toward the communications efforts.)

The informal feedback may also be of a negative nature. Don't ignore it. When persons or groups indicate their displeasure with the schools, you need to carefully assess those concerns and consider ways of combating them with some type of communication.

Evaluation is essential. The informal approach has obvious scientific limitations. We can learn a great deal from the results of the more formal techniques used by the larger school districts and this information is usually available through the professional literature.

Let's be honest. Regardless of what you do, if you are a willing listener, you will hear enough about the schools, good and bad, to give you a rather accurate picture of the effectiveness of your communications program. Use it to your advantage.

Chapter 6
Summary

In spite of limited personnel, time and financial resources, the small school district can and must offer a comprehensive and effective communications program.

Combating these three obstacles (or are they excuses?) depends on the total commitment of the board of education and the chief school administrator and how well they can share their enthusiasm with the rest of the school community.

Accept the fact that you are not going to have the benefit of a full-time PR person. In respect to the time needed for the communications task, it is simply a matter of being highly organized and deciding that this time is priority over every other job responsibility. Nothing can be more important than communications because everything else in the school and community eventually depends upon its effectiveness.

The final obstacle, money, is vastly overstated. The only legitimate costs beyond personnel time center around printing costs. The materials printed "in-house," although a bit home-made in appearance, may be more palatable to your community than expensive-looking pieces of information. Having materials printed at the commercial level needs to be carefully considered, but is essential for certain projects.

Communications must have the highest priority in any small district. The professional literature tells us that the public will **demand** an effective and comprehensive program. Excuses for anything less will not be accepted. Don't they really deserve it?

SECTION II
PR For Suburban Districts

George F. Hamel
Director, School/Community Relations
Fairfax County (Va.) Public Schools

Chapter 1
Planning The Program

A well-defined policy is a cornerstone for planning and conducting the public relations program in any school district, but particularly important for suburban districts. It should define the philosophy of the program and include guidelines covering such areas as:

- the role of the information officer in carrying out this commitment;
- the position of the information officer relative to the board of education and the superintendent — which, it is hoped, includes a direct personal line of communication to the superintendent;

- the responsibility, authority, and role of the local school principal in the information program — especially in crisis situations;
- the relationship of the information officer to the local school principal.

A public relations program must always be designed to meet the special needs of a school district. However, a PR program for suburban districts must deal with a number of unique concerns. These include:

- **Geographical Area.** Suburban districts frequently encompass hundreds of square miles and include a number of municipalities.

- **Population Consideration.** The enrollment of the district and the interests and attitudes of the population often varies considerably in a suburban district.

- **Sense of Community.** Frequently there is little or no strong sense of overall "feeling of community." The schools may be the only force for developing a feeling.

- **Competition for Attention.** While this is a vital consideration in planning any public relations program, it may be complicated in a suburban district where distances become a factor and where cultural and recreational opportunities are frequently offered outside the schools by other community groups and/or agencies, thus creating a form of competition with the schools.

- **Targeting.** An essential element in planning the suburban PR program is "targeting" — defining the various internal and external "publics" which the program must reach and identifying the needs of each.

- **Channels and Messages.** A well-planned program will use all available channels to send and receive messages from targeted publics. Messages must be carefully planned, written, and evaluated as to channels to be used — mass media (press, radio and television), district publications, or interpersonal communication — person-to-person.

Chapter 2
How To Do It

Any good PR program should include these four important points:

1. **Honesty and Credibility.** The information officer as spokesperson for the district must be honest in dealing with the public and must insist upon honesty on the part of all other staff members. This does not mean that every bit of information can or should be aired publicly. It does mean that factual information should be provided at all times. This emphasis will assure the credibility necessary for an effective PR program.
2. **Openness.** The PR officer must constantly guard against the tendency of some school administrators to downplay or perhaps "cover up" problems. A district simply includes too many people for news to be "covered up" — it will quickly come out anyway.
3. **Objectivity.** Information should be as objective as possible to avoid the charge of using public funds for "propaganda purposes."
4. **Low Profile.** Generally, low visibility is the most successful profile for the PR officer. Despite the fact that the PR person is frequently the district spokesperson in a suburban system, this individual should still remain in the background as much as possible — coordinating and administering the program, but focusing the spotlight on others — school administrators, board members, staff people, etc.

Components Of The Program

There is always a tendency for those planning school PR programs, whether the information officer or school administrator, to rely heavily on the written word. There is a need, of course, for a wide range of publications to carry information about the school district, its programs and plans. But there is also the need to provide this information in a number of ways — through audiovisual com-

munication; through person-to-person contacts; over radio, television and to an increasing extent in many areas — cable television.

While it is important to recognize that publications cannot do the total job of communicating a school district's story to its many publics, it is equally important to follow some basic rules if your publications are to be effective. They should be:

- Clearly worded, simple, brief, and attractive.
- Inexpensive to produce to avoid criticism regarding the use of public funds.
- Tailored to the target public (or publics).
- Distributed inexpensively.
- Of various types: newsletters, bulletins, handbooks, guides, special purpose publications, calendars and in some areas annual reports.

The Media

The media ranks as the top source of information about schools by community residents who don't have children in school. The media also ranks high on the list of sources of information parents use to find out about schools. It goes without saying, then, that media relations must be a top priority for all school PR officers and administrators.

Suburban districts are frequently served by more types and numbers of media outlets than either urban or small districts. This variety provides both a unique opportunity and a challenge. Development of a close personal relationship between schools and key media people is essential, but frequently difficult in suburban areas. There is a rapid turnover of education reporters covering the school beat calling for ongoing efforts on the part of the PR officer to develop rapport with and "train" a steady stream of new reporters. It is critical for the PR officer to determine the interests of the various media that serves the community and to stimulate and feed these interests. If interest appears to be lacking, it may be necessary to make a major effort to encourage it.

Many suburban districts have developed extensive information programs and materials for reporters that cover the schools. (See the guide on *Working With the Media* in the NSPRA **Basic School PR Kit.**)

It is frequently said that the media are interested only in negative news about schools. This is unfair, but it is true that PR officers must spend a great deal of time, effort and ingenuity in an aggressive

program to arouse media interest to the many story ideas available in district schools. Such an effort should include:

- Development of a wide media mailing and telephone list along with a steady flow of information.
- Maintenance of daily telephone contact with media about school events and programs.
- Publication and distribution of story ideas on a regular basis. A "media tip sheet" listing several programs or activities is helpful to the media and brings results. This tip sheet should include a carefully worded description of the activity along with the name and phone number of the person to be contacted for additional information or to arrange coverage.
- Press conferences **when warranted.** Call a press conference only when you have something of extreme interest to the mass media. Be certain to have backup materials and time the conference so that it will not conflict with news deadlines. Such conferences, if they are to be well attended, should cover major events — release of budget figures, plans for a bond issue or finance campaign, release of test scores, etc.
- Provision of school board meeting material to the media and distribution of the agenda well in advance of the meeting as well as a board summary preferably the day following the meeting. Board backup materials should be made available to all the media in advance of the meeting. The information officer should sit with or near the reporters at the meeting ready to assist them in getting their stories.
- Send staff and community newsletters as well as other district publications to the media. High school newspaper staffs should also be encouraged to include media outlets in the distribution of their papers.

Electronic Media

The electronic media has probably caused more changes in society and the habits of people than any other single development. Yet educators have been slow to adapt to these changes and to make use of the media which have caused them. The challenges, opportunities, and frustrations of dealing with the electronic media are many but the rewards are great.

Radio

After the initial impact of television dealt it a serious blow, radio has gradually reestablished itself as a highly important communications medium for schools.

The typical suburban school district is served by many AM and FM stations using various programming formats. Of major importance to the PR officer is the federal regulation which presently requires a station devote a portion of its time to **community service.**

The major advantage of radio is its capability to transmit spot announcements and hard news instantaneously. It is invaluable to the suburban school district for announcing closings and schedule changes due to weather or other emergency conditions. Where several stations are involved, simple codes should be established to preclude transmission of crank or prank messages. Care should be taken to ensure that messages to be transmitted are clear and simple. The speed of radio and the tendency of the audience to "half-listen" can result in "mishearing" important messages if they are complicated or not carefully prepared.

- Radio should be used for public service type announcements (PSAs). These include announcements of important events and even efforts to recruit personnel for hard-to-fill positions such as school bus drivers and food service workers. PSAs also highlight special programs — handicapped education, magnet schools, work-study programs, etc.
- All-news stations as well as other stations emphasizing news coverage will attend and tape school news conferences, board meetings and other events where "news is being made." Radio stations will also tape actualities over the phone of interviews with board members, the superintendent, or the information officer in the role of official spokesperson for broadcast instantly or at a later time.
- Many suburban districts produce their own radio programs or provide staff members and program material for local radio stations which in turn produce their own community service programs. In some cases, the districts use a station's facilities for taping or for live programming. Another method, and an inexpensive one, is for programs to be taped by the district public relations staff. Programs can include school news, interviews with staff and students, and even music by student groups. These programs can be offered to all radio stations with duplicate tapes provided to each user.

Television

Probably no single technological advance has had as great an impact on society as television. It also presents additional opportunities, challenges and frustrations! In attempting to get television coverage, school administrators and PR officers should remember the characteristics and capabilities of television — **it is a fleeting medium that thrives on conflict and on human interest stories that are photogenic and can be told quickly.** Like radio, the primary interest of television news people is hard news, although feature stories also have appeal. Television is able to devote more time to the **telling of a story** than radio.

Suburban school districts are usually served by multiple television outlets — both commercial and educational channels — and, in many areas, cable TV.

- **Commercial Television.** Usually commercial television stations are interested in coverage of education primarily as news. Most commercial stations do provide some youth programming which offers opportunities for coverage of classroom and school activities. The school district information office should assist in arranging and encouraging student participation in these programs.
- **Educational Television.** Educational stations frequently provide regular news coverage in their programming. They also include public affairs programs which cover local events in more depth than is done in regular news broadcasts. These programs are ideal for coverage of school events, and the station should be well supplied with story ideas. Educational stations also frequently cover school board meetings.
- **Cable Television (CATV).** The big boom of the '80s in television promises to be cable, and suburban areas are a prime target. In addition to providing multichannel coverage, cable ordinances typically require the franchise to reserve channels for educational usage and to provide community access. CATV offers expanded opportunities for school programming.

Telephone

The telephone offers an inexpensive and very effective public relations tool. A code-a-phone provides the capability of recording news about school events and special messages in emergency situations, which can be dialed by the public. **The number should be well**

publicized. A **message phone** which can record comments and provide school information for callers is rapidly becoming an important part of suburban district PR programs.

Suburban Newspapers

Usually a suburban district will be served by a number of daily, weekly or biweekly newspapers. These include "freebies," or advertisers which use educational material, as well as those sold by subscription, on news stands and in vending machines. Some may be regional, while others serve the entire area. These newspapers are a particularly worthwhile target for the school information effort. Rarely does this type of paper cover national or world news and depends for its survival and prosperity on its coverage of local news. Usually education is one of its major interests.

Face-to-Face Communication

There is still no substitute for face-to-face, two-way communications. The characteristics of suburban school districts make such efforts extremely difficult, but try these:

- **Opinion Leaders or Key Communicators.** Since size, geographical spread, and other factors limit direct communications, the development of a network of communicators who can help the information effort within the community is highly desirable. In addition to the usual "school board watchers," PTA leaders, including local school officers, heads of civic associations, and other community leaders should be included in the network. They should be placed on mailing lists for agendas, board summaries, newsletters, including staff publications, and other special materials.

- **Advisory Councils.** Many school boards and superintendents have found that advisory councils and committees can be extremely valuable. Councils of representatives from various employee groups help improve community relations by promoting awareness and ensuring discussion of areas of concern. Again, the information officer should provide information about the school system to these groups and frequently serve as liaison with the administration and board.

- **Community Forums.** These provide an opportunity for dialogue between school boards, superintendents, staffs, and the community. They are most successful when directed to specific concerns. Care should be taken to ensure that such forums are not dominated by **one special interest group.**
- **Speakers Bureau.** The information officer should develop a speakers bureau and encourage requests for speakers for meetings and other community events.
- **Seminars and Workshops.** These can be valuable when provided for groups such as realtors and "Welcome Wagon" people who can in turn provide information about the school system to new members of the community.
- **Support of the Local School.** The key to good, or bad, school-community relations is found at the local school level. Support of local school efforts must be a top priority of the suburban school information officer.
- **Assistance** including inservice workshops should be provided to help building principals develop school newspapers, newsreleases and other information for the news media. Frequent student news conferences should be scheduled with the superintendent to provide an opportunity for exchange of views, discussion of problems, and promotion of communication between students, the administration and the board of education.
- **Support of the local school principal** in a crisis situation is oneof the most important functions of the information officer. A crisis policy defining the role of PR officer in such situations is essential to avoid problems.

CRISIS PLANNING

"The most critical few hours in the history of the Parkway (Mo.) School District could face us 10 minutes from now . . . or tomorrow . . . or next week . . . because no school system is immune to an emergency or disaster having an immediate and negative physical or mental effect on its students, teachers and/or staff." This is the introduction to an Emergency and Disaster Plan Check List for the district prepared by the district director of school-community relations.

"To help minimize the risk of major oversights or other errors while operating in the glare of publicity under stress conditions," the check list continues, "the following specific guidelines should be followed when disturbances, accidents or catastrophes occur which affect groups of students, teachers or staff. The immediate purpose of the plan is to get the facts to families, friends and the general public — and to the proper authorities — as quickly as they are known and as often as new facts become known."

The checklist, which is prepared and distributed to all schools principals and administrators each fall, includes the following guidelines:

- Immediately notify the appropriate agency or agencies such as police, fire, ambulance, hospital or health authorities.
- Insure the safety of all students, staff and other persons in the immediate area.
- Refer all news media representatives to the superintendent's office or school-community relations office.
- In the event of a major disaster or crisis, a press room will be set up in the district administration center equipped with desks, chairs, typewriters, telephones, etc.
- Additional operators will be provided to handle calls coming to the district switchboard.
- It is the responsibility of the superintendent's office to notify district attorneys and insurance agents.

(From "Building Public Confidence in YOUR Schools," 1978, National School Public Relations Association, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Va. 22209.)

Communicating With "Non-Parents"

The term "non-parent" is often used to refer to citizens who do not have children in the public schools. This is of course a misnomer since many of these citizens either have preschool children or have children who are no longer in school. Today this group includes more than half of the adult voting population nationwide, including most, if not all, suburban school districts.

This group is the most difficult of all "publics" to reach, and yet because of sheer numbers is one of the most important. For this reason it must be singled out for special mention. The suburban information officer must find ways to involve these "non-parents" if they are to support the school system. Ideas to promote communications with "non-parents" include:

- Inviting them to serve as school volunteers.
- Recruiting them for part-time employment in positions where they could serve.
- Inviting senior citizens to eat lunch in school cafeterias and hosting meals and programs for them in conjunction with holidays and special events.
- Inviting senior citizen and other non-parent groups to meet in school buildings.
- Promoting adult education programs and planning special course offerings to appeal to the non-parent public.
- Encouraging community use of school buildings by outside groups.

Chapter 3
Evaluating The Program

Too often communicators "think" that their communications efforts are succeeding and that they "know" what their publics want to hear and are receptive to. But, no communication program can be judged a success with this type of evaluation.

The school administrator or PR officer must find out the

answer to a very simple question, "Is anyone listening?" A public relations program may have all the proper ingredients but if its publics aren't listening, the time, money, and effort expended on it have been wasted.

Evaluating a public relations program is difficult, but in order to justify the very existence of the program and to overcome any weaknesses in it, a program of evaluation or feedback must be conducted.

Steps in evaluating the information program should include the following:

- Continuous examination of the use of news releases and feature ideas as well as success in obtaining media coverage of school events. This should include a scrapbook or file of clippings of school stories from newspapers.
- Annual survey of parents to determine their reaction to the information effort — both the district and local school programs. (See Appendix B.) This can be done by telephone or written questionnaire, perhaps with assistance from PTA groups.
- Annual mailing list survey which can serve the dual purpose of updating the list. The mailing list should include the "key communicators," whose reactions are important.
- Annual survey of key staff and principals, as well as of advisory councils and committees to the school board and superintendent.
- Tabulation of comments of citizens calling for information or to comment or complain about the school district.

Such an evaluation should provide a good indication as to strengths and weaknesses of the district communication program. The results of the evaluation and recommended changes should be shared with the superintendent and board of education, preferably in an annual conference scheduled to review the entire PR program.

Chapter 4
Summary

A comprehensive, aggressive and vigorous information program is essential in today's suburban school district in order to gain support and understanding of the school system. It is becoming even more important as fiscal problems of local governments increase.

The program, to be successful, should be well planned and executed, with all available channels of communications used in a continuing effort to reach the target publics. The message should be clear and concise if it is to be listened to by the public, given the keen competition for attention in today's society.

The information officer should avoid overemphasis on the printed word, while exerting special effort in developing electronic and face-to-face means of communications.

Support of the local school should be a major thrust in the public relations program. The local school, always the key to school-community relations, becomes even more important in a suburban school district because of its special characteristics.

An organized method of evaluation is vital in providing justification for and modifications to the program.

SECTION III
PR For Large Districts

Jerome G. Kovalcik
Assistant Superintendent, School/Community Relations
New York City (N.Y.) Public Schools

Overview

At the recent annual conference of the Council of Great City Schools, board members, superintendents and other administrators from 28 of the nation's largest cities conceded that they have special troubles. These include educating large numbers of economically disadvantaged students, desegregation, municipal overburden, shrinking school budgets, ethnically diverse populations and aging physical plants. But when one conference speaker dwelled over-long on the negative side of urban education, a participant pointed out tartly, "That's a scintillating description of **where we were,** but it's not **where we are now."**

What the participants were saying was that urban educators have already recaptured their own confidence in the ability of schools to serve city students. These educators felt that the city school systems have turned the corner and are ready to build on their successes. They are now working to instill their own confi-

dence into the minds and hearts of the city, state and federal taxpayers whose support is vital to continued improvement of the schools.

That restoration of public confidence in urban public education will depend to a large degree on the effectiveness of the school-community relations programs conducted by the large districts and individual schools.

So much in the total life of a city affects the school system and the children and adults it serves. Even the most capable school boards and superintendents are fighting a holding action against conditions over which they and the schools have no control: poverty, crime, drugs, "white flight," urban decay and unemployment. The reform which city school officials are expecting will be possible only if they keep in mind that schools are interdependent with other social systems, and schools can be changed only through the intensive involvement of those other systems.

The planning and implementation of a city school district's public relations program must take into consideration this need for closer interdependence. The total city community — the municipal government with all its agencies, business, industry and labor must be invited to become intensively involved with the schools for the total development of its citizens.

Service And Comprehensiveness

Only a public relations program that is dedicated to service for **all the publics** of a school district, comprehensive in all other aspects, and designed for **two-way** communication, can survive. Programs limited to **one-way** communication through mass media and publications will not endure.

The Division of Public Affairs of the New York City Public Schools continues to have public support even after a series of harsh system-wide budget cuts, primarily because of its comprehensiveness. I recall being asked by members of the city council at public budget hearings to justify the budget for **education information services and public relations** in the face of the city's serious fiscal problems. When I explained that our office was the center of information for students, parents and other citizens, and included such activities as the telephone information system, records access, implementation of the Family Privacy Act, the Action Center (an ombudsman operation), information for immigrants, and the handling of requests from film companies, photographers, etc. for using schools, they recognized the full scope of the program.

When they heard that we provided the liaison between the Board of Education and the Chancellor with the 15 major parent federations in the city and monitored the board's policy on the rights and responsibilities of parent associations; that we sought feedback from community, civic and business groups; that we arranged for visits to schools; that we created special events and projects like student concerts and festivals, heritage celebrations, student award ceremonies; that we provided in-service training in community relations for districts, divisions, offices and schools; and that we recruited hundreds of volunteers for one-to-one assistance to students; the request for justification of the budget for public relations turned to wonderment that we accomplished so much with the funds allotted to us.

Board Policy Essential

Comprehensiveness and service-orientation, however, do not develop overnight. They spring from board of education policy, an understanding of the essential components of a public relations program and a complete in-service training of all members of a school district and school family.

The larger a school district, the more it needs a publicly adopted board of education policy on school-community relations. Without a central policy, the many schools, the hundreds of administrators and supervisors and thousands of employees will tend to go off on their own approach to relations with their publics, with varying results. A policy provides guidelines for effective common action. (See Appendix C.)

Chapter 1
Essential Ingredients

No PR program can be complete without planned activities to (1) tell the school story, (2) obtain feedback, (3) involve internal and external publics and (4) enhance human relations. Counseling and in-service training of all members of the school family in school-community relations are essential for urban programs.

Every school and every district staff should ask: "What are we doing **now** to tell the school story? What are we doing **now** to find out what our publics think about us? What are we doing **now** to involve parents, students, teachers and others in decision-making and in our other operations? What are we doing **now** to be sensitive, considerate and tactful in all our dealings with each other and our publics? What are we doing **now** to get every member of the school family (professional and support staff members) to understand what good public relations is and to realize his or her role in promoting such relations?

Telling The Story Of The Schools

Urban districts can tell the story of the schools in many ways: through the mass media of newspapers, magazines, radio, television; their own publications and audio-visual presentations; person-to-person (interpersonal) communication; special events and projects; school visits and tours; and other techniques.

Superintendent Michael P. Marcase of the Philadelphia Public Schools said recently:

"It is ironic that we hear so much criticism of our school system locally while we are recognized nationally and internationally for the excellence of our programs.

"But that just means that we must all, as a school family, work doubly hard to tell the same kind of story in Philadelphia that is being told around the country.

"And that story is that we are all striving with everything that is in us, in the midst of the vast and complex social and economic

problems of urban America, to provide educational excellence to the public school children of Philadelphia."

John Wherry, Executive Director of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), warned large city superintendents and board members at the 1979 conference of the Council of the Great City Schools that "the press will not be your press agent."

News Bureau

The news bureau of a large school district must be in the foreground of efforts to tell the education story. The activity description of New York City's Media Communications Unit reads as follows:

> "To consult with the Board and the Chancellor on policy and administrative decisions and to communicate those policies and actions through the news media; to serve as a channel of communications between all segments of the school system and the news media; to provide service and counsel on dealings with the media for central offices, local districts, and individual schools; to arrange news conferences, when appropriate, and to inform the media of newsworthy events, feature stories and other school activities that they might wish to convey by sending out news releases or memorandums and by making direct contact through phone calls or in person; to arrange for radio and TV appearances by school officials on interview and other public service programs; to develop, place and produce public service programs for broadcast over local stations; to write/produce and disseminate public service announcements relating to Board programs to the broadcast media."

Publications Program

To rely solely on the media to tell the school story, however, would render a city school district's public relations program woe-

fully incomplete. A publications program must supplement the effort. A regularly-published and widely-distributed newsletter, an annual factual and statistical report, pamphlets outlining board policies on student rights and responsibilities, diploma requirements, student records, etc. can cover subjects and provide the kind of detail that the mass media will not cover.

Special Events

Another vital supplement is a program of special events and projects. These not only contribute to the telling of the school story by the communication they achieve with the audiences involved, but also by attracting newspaper, radio and television coverage. They also promote involvement in school affairs by city, state and national offices, firms and other organizations.

Information Center

Information about schools can and must be told through interpersonal — person-to-person communication techniques and programs. Members of the community have a "right to know" about their schools.

An information center conveniently located in the central administration or board of education building with a phone number widely publicized is essential. Such a center should serve as the hub of an information program, not only to handle incoming calls for information, but visitors needing assistance and coordination of the wide range of district services.

An information center must, to be effective, serve as a quick referral center with staff members having access to a vast amount of information so that those seeking answers are quickly matched with those having the answers. Cutting through the bureaucratic red tape of large city school systems to provide the public with ready information must be the goal of all such centers.

Chapter 2
Person-to-Person Techniques

The range of techniques for telling the school story through person-to-person communication is immensely wide. It is particularly in this mode of communication that every member of the school family can participate effectively. While the mass media can provide parents and others with information they ought to know about their schools, interpersonal communication has the added effect of strengthening or changing attitudes. Genuine public support for public education depends on attitudes at least as much as, if not more than, on information.

Action Center

The **Chancellor's Action Center** in New York City was formed with the help of the action center of one of the city's radio stations which trained volunteer parents in the receiving and resolution of complaints. The staff member in charge was hired from the ranks of active parent and community leaders. This lent credibility to the operation. Over the period of a year, an average of 20 telephone complaints were received daily, primarily from parents.

Speakers Bureau

A **speakers bureau** is an excellent means to bring the message of the schools to small groups of parents and other citizens. The services of the bureau are publicized through a special brochure listing speakers and topics and by newspapers, radio and television announcements.

Visits To Schools

An organized program to bring visitors to schools enables the

public to get a first-hand view of the schools and see for themselves the every-day teaching and learning in the classrooms and the activities of a school.

A recent annual report of the Dallas (Texas) Independent Schools stressed the importance of having citizens view education in progress. After indicating that many citizens took part in school tours and saw for themselves the physical equipment and children at work and were able to ask questions concerning the operation, the report expressed regret that not all citizens were able to take part in the visits. The report then took the readers through a photographic tour of the schools.

Feedback

Person-to-person communication has the additional advantage of a built-in means for finding out what the various publics think about their district and schools.

When a speakers bureau member accepts an invitation to speak on a school topic before a service club, civic organization or a parents association, he or she is in a favorable position to conduct a question-and-answer session immediately after the main presentation. The contents of the questions and comments from members of the audience together with the tone in which they are spoken can deliver important messages which the speaker can take back to the district office or to the school.

The same is true of the organized visits to schools. Visitors often ask pertinent and pointed questions which can provide an insight into their thoughts about the schools. It is important, however, to make district and school representatives aware of the importance of listening for such feedback and reporting what they hear to the appropriate people.

The Columbus, Ohio, school system found a series of monthly breakfasts for business, industry, parent and civic representatives provided valuable information about public attitudes towards the schools.

Most essential to learning what the public thinks of its schools is constant alertness to what people are saying and to what people are asking. **Passive listening is of no value. Active listening can be invaluable.**

The guide in the NSPRA **Basic School PR KIT** on *Survey/Feedback* lists many ways to build feedback into your PR program. You may want to consult it for additional suggestions.

Involvement

The more parents and other citizens are involved in the schools the more they are going to know about them, and the stronger their support will be. The Legislature of the state of New York, when it enacted the law which decentralized the elementary, intermediate and junior high schools of New York City, provided that there must be a parent association or parent-teacher association in every school. The board of education then invited the fifteen major parent federations to help draft a policy to implement the law. The policy gives parent associations a "piece of the action" — which is really what involvement means.

When establishing any school advisory committee you should be careful to spell out the charge to the committee noting that their role is one of advising and recommending, the time-line in which you expect them to work and what steps will be taken regarding any of their recommendations. If all those concerned — advisory committee members, board of education and staff — are clearly aware of their individual roles and responsibilities before starting a task, you will avoid countless problems in the future.

School Family

One of the most effective techniques for involving people in the schools is the utilization of the **school family** concept which includes regularly scheduled meetings of the school principal and his instructional staff with administrators, teachers, students, parents, cafeteria workers, custodians, secretaries, local community leaders and interested citizens.

School Volunteers

School volunteer programs throughout the country have promoted the kind of involvement that breeds public support and goodwill.

Houston (Texas) Schools, Los Angeles and other major urban districts have developed extensive volunteer programs during the past several years recruiting thousands of volunteers who serve as aides and tutors. This vast army of community volunteers has literally saved millions of dollars on school budgets, and in turn, has provided a network of communicators from the schools to the community.

Community Partnerships

A need to involve all segments of the community in its school system has been met with outstanding success in the Dade County (Fla.) Public Schools. The nation's fifth largest school system with some 235,000 students developed a **Dade Partners** program designed to create a wide variety of partnerships between the school system and all segments of the community including business, social services and government.

The program was launched at a community leaders' breakfast in October 1978 sponsored by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. Staff from the district office of community and informational services gave a slide/tape presentation concerning the intent of Dade Partners, the kinds of services needed in schools, and the long-range effects the program might have on the quality of education in Dade County schools and the quality of life in the community in general.

Parent and Community Cooperation

Here are some successful activities to promote parent and community involvement in large city schools:

- Parents participate in the planning of Open School Week programs, ceremonies commemorating Puerto Rico Discovery Day, and activities honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Parent associations prepare and publish parent handbooks.
- Parent associations plan certain school assembly programs.
- Principals designate a special room in the school as the **Parents Lounge.** These rooms are used as a parent information center, for display of children's and parents' arts and crafts, etc. Parents who come into this special room get the feeling, "It's our school."
- Families join teachers in planning and arranging Saturday excursions to college campuses, museums, and other learning resources in the city. Mothers, dads, children and teachers spend the day together and return to school late Saturday afternoon, and before going home discuss the educational value of what they have seen or done.
- Doctors, nurses, police, clergy, and other neighborhood residents serve on school and district committees.
- Parents are consultants in human relations workshops.
- Parents and other neighborhood residents volunteer to "keep an eye on school buildings" to prevent vandalism.

Human Relations

No matter how many well-planned programs a district or school uses to tell the school story, obtain feedback and promote involvement, it cannot expect good results unless **good human relations** permeate all activities. Indeed, good human relations must undergird the entire operation of a district and its schools.

Human relations are not simply a tolerance for race or religion or other differences among people. It is a genuine and sincere respect for ideas, feelings and concerns of all who make up the school family and of those who are outside it until they are drawn into it. Without this climate, the unlocking of talent, the mobilization of all resources needed, and the goodwill of the publics will simply not be possible.

New York City's self-survey booklet for principals entitled *What's Your School PRQ?* (Public Relations Quotient) includes questions related to good human relations. (See Appendix D.)

Chapter 3
Evaluation Of Your Program

It is not easy to evaluate a PR program in a large district. In fact many school administrators find it difficult to evaluate such efforts regardless of district size. The problem stems from the fact that PR programs, like instructional programs, must be individualized to meet specific needs. Thus it is essential that each district draw up its own evaluation criteria to measure i' particular efforts.

However, there are certain basics that all PR efforts (regardless of district size) should include. The following list was developed by the Dallas (Tex.) Independent School District.

(1) **Is your district truly committed to good PR?**
(2) **Do you have a measurable PR plan?**

(3) **Are key publics involved?**
(4) **Are your activities varied?**
(5) **Does everyone understand and is each prepared to handle his or her PR role?**

When the answers to these five points are compiled you will still not have a complete picture of how well you're doing. But there are additional ways to develop a systematic assessment of your results which should be adapted to your situation. Again, they should be individualized to meet your district's specific needs.

- Opinion polls
- Publication surveys
- Degree of parent involvement
- Election results review
- Use of advisory groups
- Review of incoming telephone calls and mail
- Analysis of media coverage
- Board atmosphere

And as a final step in the evaluation of your program — review how well your performance matched your planned objectives.

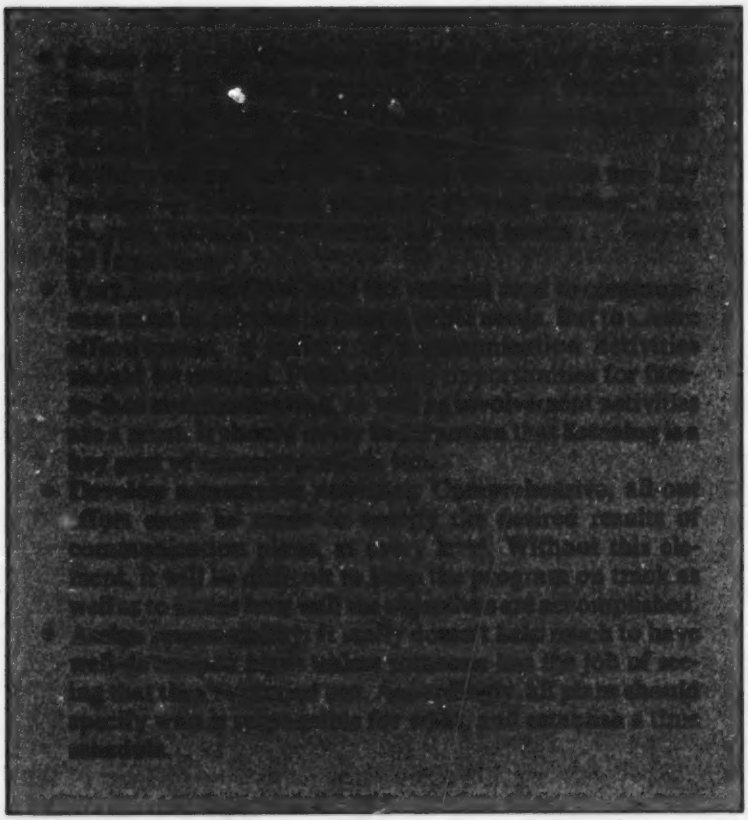
Chapter 4
Summary

Mention has already been made of the need for every member of the school family to understand the importance of his or her role in an effective school public relations program. No board of education alone — no superintendent alone — no public relations director alone — not all three alone — can successfully tell the school story, obtain feedback, promote involvement and enhance good human relations in today's large school districts. It takes the whole education team to do it. For this to happen, it is vital that there be a guiding board of education policy that makes improvement of public relations the responsibility of all employees and that man-

dates a thorough in-service training program in school public relations for all employees; and the implementation by the superintendent and the director of public relations of a systematic plan for providing that training.

It is essential that a written, measurable plan be in existence for the district as a whole as well as for the various departments and individual school buildings.

Larry Ascough, associate superintendent, Dallas (Tex.) Independent School District, has set out key factors to be considered in such plans:



In summary, an effective communication plan in a large school system (or small for that matter) and its many publics, is complex and challenging. The task requires commitment, planning, hard work and constant monitoring. But if public education is to continue its role as the keystone of democracy, it's a job that has to be done . . . and done right!

APPENDIX A

COMMUNICATIONS GRID

Internal Publics	Staff Newsletter	Welcome Dinner	TIP Sheet	Impact Statement	Birthday Card	Annual Report	Holiday Open House	Job. Anal. Handbook	Proud of Piqua's Youth
Certified Staff	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Non-Certified	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Students									X
Sub Teachers	X	X			X	X	X		
Board Members		X				X	X	X	X
Student Teachers	X	X	X			X	X		
Volunteers						X	X		
Admin. Team	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION OF PUBLICATIONS

1. Supergram. This newsletter is intended to provide each employee of FCPS with up-to-date news of importance--both personal and official--about our school system and its employees. (This is not intended to be a vehicle for publicizing student achievements or general community announcements.)

   a. Do you feel the Supergram achieves its stated purpose? Yes_____ No_____

   b. Comments and or suggestions for improvement:

2. Bulletin. This publication was produced five times this year as a professional staff magazine. Basic distribution was 15 per elementary, 20 per intermediate, 25 per high, and 40 per secondary school; additional distribution was arranged by departments concerned.

   a. Were copies of the Bulletin available to you this year?

      _____ Yes----------
      _____ No

      If yes,

      (1) Did you read it?

      _____ Yes
      _____ No
      _____ Sometimes

      (2) What is your feeling with respect to the quality of the publication (content and format)?

      _____ Excellent _____ Poor
      _____ Good _____ No Opinion
      _____ Fair

   b. In future issues of the Bulletin, what curriculum or supporting service subjects would you be most interested in reading? List roughly in the order of importance to you. (1978-79 subjects: mainstreaming the handicapped; new programs in social studies; music curriculum K-12; preparing for world of work (2).)

APPENDIX C

New York City Public Schools
Board Resolution and Policy Statement

Whereas the goal of excellence in schools will be reached only with public understanding and support; and

Whereas public understanding and support are achieved through effective two-way communication between the schools and the public and through active involvement of the public in the operation of the schools; and

Whereas the promotion of a positive school-community relations program including such communication and involvement is the responsibility of the Board of Education. Be it, therefore,

Resolved that the Board of Education adopts the following Statement of Policy on School-Community Relations and directs the Superintendent of Schools to implement it.

1. The Board of Education represents the people of the School District in their desire to provide the best educational opportunities for their children.
2. The Board of Education welcomes and encourages the active participation of citizens in planning for the highest excellence of their public schools.
3. The Board of Education seeks the support of the city administration and its agencies, of business, industry and labor, and of colleges and universities in providing the best possible environment for the total development of the city's children and young adults.
4. Meaningful involvement of parent associations is essential to effective representation of the individual school communities.
5. All decisions of the Board are made in public, with full opportunity extended to citizens to be heard prior to these decisions.
6. Parents and other citizens have a right to know how their schools are functioning and the Board of Education has the responsibility to inform them about the administration and operation of the schools frankly and completely by every possible medium.
7. The Board of Education has the responsibility to use every possible means to ascertain public attitudes about all phases of its operations for consideration in the planning of policies, procedures and programs.
8. Effective internal relations and communication are essential to effective school-community relations.
9. Every member of the Board of Education and every employee of the school system has a role in the development of a successful school-community relations program.
10. Good human relations is basic to a good school-community relations program.

APPENDIX D

PRQ

(Public Relations Quotient)

Check List

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS

A principal's personality has an extraordinary influence on the success of the public relations program of his school. His personal appearance, tact, keen sensitivity to human relations, sense of humor, democratic attitude, ability to communicate and inspire are some of the personality factors that contribute to effective relations with the school community.

ARE YOU:

____ Able to command respect by appearance, personality and character?

____ Able to meet everyday problems, find right solutions?

____ Ready to change decisions in the interests of justice and the well-being of your school and pupils?

____ Courteous, honest and forthright in your dealings with people?

____ A reasonable human being, kind, patient, tolerant and understanding?

____ Friendly and cheerful, possessed of a sense of humor?

____ Able to maintain an air of calmness at all times?

____ Aware of your many publics?

____ Available to those who wish to see you without losing sight of your primary responsibility, the supervision and improvement of instruction?

____ Able to present your ideas in simple, understandable, yet accurate language?

____ An able public speaker?

____ Able to prevent and adjust conflicts between the school and parents?

____ Able to interpret effectively the work of the school to the parents and the community?

APPENDIX D . . . continued

____Careful to avoid use of words or expressions which offend individuals and groups in the school community?

____Able to delegate functions without relinquishing responsibility?

____Willing to listen to complaints carefully, investigate the facts objectively and seek to use them constructively?

____Willing to cooperate with other agencies in the community in protecting the health, well-being and safety of children?

____Able to provide leadership in assisting the people of the community to cooperate with the school in the efforts to attain worthwhile goals and to improve the educational program?

____Able to maintain constructive relations with the press and other media of communication?

____Able to establish and maintain the kind of relationship with your field superintendent that will facilitate easy communication, in order to keep your superior informed of situations before they result in crises; seek his counsel and together work for the successful resolution of problems?

____Sensitive to the need for district-wide and city-wide coordination of communication with publicity media when what happens in your school is part of a broader picture affecting other schools and agencies?

The main business of the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), formed in 1935, is to help bring about better citizen understanding of the objectives, accomplishments, and needs of schools. NSPRA's mission is to build support for education through responsible public relations and communication.

If the duties of your position call for communicating with the public or others in the field of education, NSPRA membership is a must for you. NSPRA member services include: *PARAGRAPHS* (member newsletter), Public Relations Resource Center, Research Assistance, PR Hotline Counseling Service, Personnel Clearinghouse, National Representation, reduced rates for members at NSPRA's annual National Seminar and a voluntary accreditation program. There are four categories of NSPRA membership: institutional, professional, associate, and student.

Other NSPRA Products, Services and Activities include: *EDUCATION USA, IT STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM* and *FEDERAL FUNDING ALERT* newsletters; workshops and consulting services; special publications and audiovisual materials.

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